

Senator Formica, Senator Osten, and Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

In advance, thank you for your attention as I share with you my remarks on Bill HB-7027

I am Dr. Joe Erardi, Superintendent of Schools in Newtown. I have been a proud public school educator for 40 years with the last 30 as a school administrator. This is year number 18 as a superintendent.

I am hoping that my 40 years has earned your attention for three minutes.

At this moment, I share my thoughts with you perhaps never having greater concern for CT. children - all children.

I fully align and support with the CT Association of Public School Superintendents' position regarding the following:

- The proposed plan must include both free and reduced lunch OR the Husky Plan to appropriately indicate children of poverty;
- The minimum special education reimbursement percentage that a district must receive has to be at least 30% of the actual cost. This is significantly different that the 0-55% proposed sliding scale for reimbursement;
- There should be no burden of Teacher Retirement on any local municipality

Presently, as proposed, the impact on Newtown would be an additional \$4.9M which simply is a tipping point to disaster. In a community that has modeled rebuild for this nation to witness the revenue shortfall would simply undo four years of partnership work on multiple levels.

The State of CT, our governor, and this legislature has stood incredibly tall with support and understanding for Newtown.

They did so by collaborating, making informed decisions, and acting in the best interest of children.

I ask the governor and this appropriations committee to give those voices who need to partner with you the opportunity to solve the deficit problem of practice that has lead us to this crossroad.

I am disappointed that our State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education have been silent on the proposal. These same voices that must be champions for all children were silent in December as the first shoe fell with a reduction in funding to our present year ECS formula.

I hold the executive directors of CAFE, CAS-CIAC, and CAPSS in only high regard. Each executive director is a realist and a champion for children.

I am respectful to the governor and applaud his willingness to resolve an extraordinarily difficult issue which he does not fully own.

I strongly suggest that the three organizations mentioned earlier partner with the legislature and the governor's office to reach a similar ending with a very different equation.

In closing, in Newtown, our everyday challenge is to make a difference - one student at a time.

I am blessed to work with a school board, leadership team, staff, and community who are simply "all in" and demonstrate their commitment every day to children.

I assure you that if this community which remains deep in needed dollars with mental health concerns and safety was to absorb a \$4.9M revenue loss our daily credo would be an impossibility.

With great respect and admiration for your work, I thank you

Dr. Joseph Erardi, Jr.
Superintendent
Newtown Public Schools